The Claims

1. (currently amended) A bacterial strain ~~for production of~~ producing polyhydroxyalkanoates wherein the bacterial strain is selected from the group consisting of *Ralstonia eutropha, Pseudomonas putida* and *Escherichia coli* and is genetically modified to express a heterologous nuclease gene, wherein the nuclease ~~gene product~~ is secreted into the periplasmic space and released when the bacteria is lysed, wherein the bacteria expresses an amount of nuclease effective to degrade at least 95% of all of the nucleic acid released following lysis of the cells in less than 24 hours and reduce the viscosity of a cell lysate in a bacterial cell culture having a density of at least 50 g/l so that recovery of product is enhanced.

2. (cancelled)

3. (currently amended) The bacterial strain of claim ~~2~~ 1 which produces a polyhydroxyalkanoate to levels of at least 40% of its dry cell weight.

4. (previously presented) The bacterial strain of claim 1 for use in an aqueous process to manufacture poly(3-hydroxyalkanoate) granule suspension which is essentially free of nucleic acids.

5. (cancelled)

6. (original) The bacterial strain of claim 1 wherein the nuclease gene is a heterologous gene obtained from an organism other than the bacterial strain.

7. (currently amended) A bacterial strain ~~for production of~~ producing polyhydroxyalkanoates, wherein the bacterial strain is selected from the group consisting of

Ralstonia eutropha, Pseudomonas putida and *Escherichia coli* and is genetically modified to express a heterologous nuclease gene integrated into the chromosome of the bacterial host, wherein the nuclease ~~gene product~~ is secreted into the periplasmic space and released when the bacteria is lysed, wherein the bacteria expresses an amount of nuclease effective to degrade at least 95% of all of the nucleic acid released following lysis of the cells in less than 24 hours.

8-10. (cancelled)

11. (withdrawn – currently amended) A fermentation process comprising

adding to a growth medium a bacterial strain ~~for production of~~ producing polyhydroxyalkanoates, wherein the bacterial strain is selected from the group consisting of *Ralstonia eutropha, Pseudomonas putida* and *Escherichia coli* and is genetically modified to express a heterologous nuclease gene, wherein the nuclease ~~gene product~~ is secreted into the periplasmic space and released when the bacteria is lysed, wherein the bacteria expresses an amount of nuclease effective to degrade at least 95% of all of the nucleic acid released following lysis of the cells in less than 24 hours.

12. (withdrawn – currently amended) The process of claim 11, wherein the bacterial strain is grown to cell densities of at least 50 g/l~~, and the nuclease gene product is released in an amount effective to degrade at least 95% of all of the nucleic acid released following lysis of the cells in less than 24 hours and reduce the viscosity of a cell lysate in a bacterial cell culture having a density of at least 50 g/l so that recovery of the product is enhanced~~.

13. (cancelled)

14. (withdrawn – previously presented) The process of claim 12 further comprising growing the bacterial strain to produce levels of at least 40% of its dry cell weight.

15. (withdrawn – previously presented) The process of claim 11 further comprising lysing the cells.

16. (withdrawn – previously presented) The process of claim 14 further comprising using an aqueous process to manufacture a poly(3-hydroxyalkanoates) granule suspension which is essentially free of nucleic acids.

Claims 17 and 18. (cancelled)

19. (withdrawn – currently amended) A fermentation process comprising

adding to a growth medium a bacterial strain ~~for production of~~ producing polyhydroxyalkanoates, wherein the bacterial strain is selected from the group consisting of *Ralstonia eutropha, Pseudomonas putida* and *Escherichia coli* and is genetically modified to express a heterologous nuclease gene integrated into the chromosome of the bacterial strain, wherein the nuclease ~~gene product~~ is secreted into the periplasmic space and released when the bacteria is lysed, wherein the bacteria expresses an amount of nuclease effective to degrade at least 95% of all of the nucleic acid released following lysis of the cells in less than 24 hours.

Claims 20-23. (cancelled)